

Virtual Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations

Thursday, 20 October 2022, at 1.15 pm

Minutes

Attendees:

Dr Maurice Manning (*Chair*)
Dr Martin Mansergh (*Deputy Chair*)
Professor Mary Daly
Mr Gabriel Doherty
Dr Anne Dolan
Professor Diarmaid Ferriter
Dr Mary Harris
Mr Jerry Kelleher
Dr Leeann Lane
Comdt. Stephen MacEoin
Dr Sinéad McCoole
Dr William Murphy
Professor Eunan O'Halpin
Ms Pauline Kiernan *D/Taoiseach*
Ms Sinéad Copeland *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Orlaith Lochrin *D/TCAGSM*
Ms Muirne Lyons *D/TCAGSM*

Apologies:

Dr Sandra Collins
Mr Francis Devine
Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Dr Éamon Phoenix
Mr Conor Falvey *D/TCAGSM*

Guest Attendees:

Joe Duffy, *Broadcaster*
Orla de Brí, *Sculptor*
Dr Andy Bielenberg, *UCC*
Dr John Crowley, *UCC*
Dr Helene O'Keeffe, *UCC*
Dr Donal Ó Drisceoil, *UCC*
Neil Leyden, *RTE.ie*

Key Points:

Broadcaster, Joe Duffy, and sculptor, Orla de Brí presented their proposals for a permanent memorial in a central location, in remembrance of the children who died during the 1916 Rising. Mr Duffy advised that he has identified forty children who lost their lives, advocating that they may also represent all the civilians killed during this period. The Chair commended the very important and detailed research undertaken to ensure that these children were remembered in 2016, which greatly resonated with the public.

It was noted that one of the priorities of the *Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme* was to highlight and remember the children who died in 1916. Drawing on Mr Duffy's research and in partnership with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, a series of structured consultations were undertaken with children to seek their ideas as to how this could be accomplished most appropriately. A ceremony was hosted by the President on 15th June 2016 in Áras an Úachtaráin, which included a lantern procession and remembrance of each of the forty children who died. A commemorative play garden was created in St Audeon's Park, Dublin 8, jointly funded by Dublin City Council and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The Group is supportive in principle of these new proposals for a permanent memorial in a publicly accessible location, recommending that careful consideration be given to ensure that the language accompanying the memorial is nuanced and appropriate.

The Chair highlighted the leading role played by local authorities throughout the Decade of Centenaries in community-led commemoration and suggested that Mr Duffy and Ms De Brí approach Dublin City Council to discuss their proposals further and explore what may be feasible.

Representatives from University College Cork and RTÉ presented their new proposals to the group - '*Mapping Irish Civil War Fatalities*'. The Chair commended the very impressive and ground-breaking work undertaken to date, with the publication of the *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* and associated multi-media engagement and television documentaries. This work continues to have an immense impact in supporting broad public engagement with our history. The UCC team gave an overview of their proposed new project – to create a geographical map of those who died during the Irish Civil War. The objective will be to establish the fact of each death for this map, giving the name, date, place, and type of fatality. Two phases are envisaged - 1) the creation of the map; and 2) engagement of an Outreach Officer, who will develop a complementary engagement programme, including schools' engagement. RTÉ has expressed its continuing support for the project.

The Group was very supportive of these proposals, noting the importance of integrating the Civil War period into our overall historical narrative. Members made some suggestions and recommendations, which were welcomed by UCC. It was noted that the project timeframe and the availability of funding will be key factors in determining the scope of what can be achieved. In order to be successful, realistic project parameters will be needed.

The minutes of the previous meeting of 6th September were agreed and there were no matters arising.

The Chair reported to the Group on matters arising from the meeting of the All-Party Consultation Group on Commemorations on 12th October. He reflected on feedback received from the All-Party Group concerning the National Concert Hall cultural event on 17th September to commemorate the Civil War, which was broadcast live by RTÉ. The All Party Group has sought guidance from the Expert Advisory Group on whether a further State-led commemorative event to mark the Civil War would be appropriate.

The Expert Advisory Group noted the importance of an appropriate and full acknowledgement of the events, impact, and legacy of the Civil War, while acknowledging also the risks associated with commemoration fatigue. There are multiple approaches to achieving this acknowledgement, with a rich diversity of significant events and initiatives developed to date at national and community level. Many of the events associated with the Civil War are being marked in a meaningful and authentic way, through the work of local authorities under the Community Strand of the Decade of Centenaries Programme.

Academic conferences, supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, such as the national conference hosted by University College Cork in June, and the

September conference hosted by The Military Archives and the Military History Society of Ireland, have ensured that complex events and themes are objectively assessed in a non-judgemental and holistic way. A conference is also planned for Spring 2023 to mark the centenary of the civil war in Kerry, supported by Kerry County Council and funded by the Department (D/TCAGSM). The opening up of national and local archives has also encouraged a thorough examination of the factual evidence for these events.

The Group agreed that a further element of recognition is required to mark the centenary of the Civil War. They advocated in principle that a potential option could include a special dedication in remembrance of all who lost their lives during the Civil War as part of an existing annual State-led commemoration. This will be considered further by the Expert Advisory Group.

The Group will also reflect on its work and advice throughout the Decade of Centenaries, examining what has been achieved in an honest and authentic way.

The Group also considered whether further opportunities for cross-border engagement may be possible and appropriate in 2023. Advice will be sought from the Department of Foreign Affairs in this regard.

The Department (D/TCAGSM) provided a further update regarding plans for 2023, highlighting progress achieved to date. It is intended to publish the 2023 programme online in Q1 of 2023. Ideas and suggestions from the Expert Advisory Group continue to be very much appreciated.

The Expert Advisory Group will consider the proposed research project on the theme of British military deserters and desertion during global war and insurgency (1912 – 1924).

The Group considered correspondence received from Deputy Christopher O’Sullivan on behalf of Coiste Comórtha Risteárd Bairéad. The Group reiterated their advice on dealing with the commemoration of various events during the Civil War which has played a central role in the Decade of Centenaries Programme to date. The Group agreed that it would not be appropriate for the Expert Advisory Group to comment on specific requests relating to State apologies.

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.

Ends.